

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Supporting Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence*, WC Docket No. 22-238; *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization*, WC Docket No. 11-42; *Affordable Connectivity Program*, WC Docket No. 21-450, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (February 16, 2023).

Thank you, Mrs. Monroe, for sharing the important work that My Sister's Place, and many other support groups, do to protect victims of domestic violence. Your testimony further cements the need for the Commission to act, and act quickly, to provide a lifeline and support those as they create a new life free from violence.

In the United States, over 12 million people each year are affected by domestic violence and the majority are women. As we just heard, for those in unsafe situations, communications technology is critical—the difference between life and death—and often the only way to find help or get to a safe place. As I've mentioned before, from the Hamilton Families in San Francisco to Miriam's Kitchen here in D.C., I have seen and visited with survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, and been stirred by the courage and resiliency that they exhibit.

It is only right that we meet these survivors where they are, and ensure that they both have access to a communications lifeline, and that their use of communications resources will not place themselves or others in danger from their abusers. I am glad that, in implementing the Safe Connections Act, we seek comment on our proposal to establish the right process to assist survivors through line separation, and remove hotlines from consumers-facing call logs. Once these rules are adopted, those in dangerous situations will be able to connect with services such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and local domestic violence shelters to get help. I'm glad that we seek comment on properly defining what is a covered hotline, and how to best identify the services that support survivors.

I would like to thank Senators Schatz, Rosen, Blumenthal, Scott, and Fischer alongside Representatives Kuster, Eshoo, and Walberg for their leadership in passing the Safe Connections Act. I would also like to thank the talented FCC staff for their work on this item. I strongly approve.